

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

SP 52/76  
30 March 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]  
Chief Coordination Staff, ICS

FROM : [REDACTED]  
Assistant National Intelligence Officer  
for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT : Comments on the DIA Threat Briefing

1. The following are comments on the [REDACTED] briefing that you requested for the purpose of preparing the DCI for questions the PFIAB might have about it. The "balance" that these comments provide concern only Soviet military and technological considerations.

2. In general, the briefing is a first-class communication in support of the US defense program. It very effectively covers the pace and scope of Soviet military programs:

-- it dramatizes, primarily to members of Congress, the quantitative trends in Soviet forces across-the-board, expanding on the military posture statement of the Secretary of Defense; and

-- it demonstrates to a potentially-skeptical, and non-technical, audience that we know whereof we speak.

The briefing's facts and projections are consistent with national intelligence issuances, from which indeed they are drawn. And by exposing high-quality photography and explaining analytical techniques, the briefing demonstrates the value of some of the high-cost intelligence collection systems.

3. The briefing, however, does not (nor was it intended to) address some of the more subtle strengths and weaknesses of Soviet military power which are considered in national intelligence estimates. Qualitative aspects are subordinated to the quantitative. Thus the possibility that in the next ten years the US will face an increasing challenge to its long-standing qualitative superiority is not stressed. Likewise, specific areas of potential Soviet technological advance, such as lasers, are not stressed. On the other hand, certain Soviet technological weaknesses, discussed in national estimates, were not addressed in the briefing. Specifically, weaknesses relative to the US in:

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-2-

- applying technological advances in military production;
- microelectronics;
- computer technology for signal processing and weapon systems guidance and control;
- missile accuracies; and
- avionics.


Shortcomings in Soviet military forces as a result of these technological weaknesses are not stressed.

Strategic forces weaknesses:

- the inadequacy of the Soviet air warning and control system;
- the inability of Soviet strategic air defenses to cope with low-altitude attacks;
- the relative noisiness of Soviet submarines; and
- the weaknesses in Soviet ASW capabilities in open ocean areas.

Theater forces weaknesses:

- at sea replenishment capabilities of Soviet naval forces;
- ASW capabilities;
- highly accurate conventional and nuclear weapons;
- limited range and ordnance-carrying capacity of tactical aircraft; and
- capabilities for projecting large Soviet military forces to distant areas.

  
Assistant National Intelligence Officer  
for Strategic Programs

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SP - 52/76

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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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